DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 170 EA 012 915

AUTHOR Spring, Rodney D.
TITLE Strategies for Effective Instructional Planning and Change.
PUB DATE 8 Jul 80
NOTE 16p.: Paper presented at the Annual Summer Conference of the American Association of School Administrators (3rd, Chicago, IL, July 6-9, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advisory Committees: *Community Involvement: Curriculum Development: Educational Innovation: Faculty Development: Needs Assessment: *Parent Participation: *Parent School Relationship: *School Community Relationship: School Support: Volunteers

ABSTRACT

This paper identifies three steps to effect change in a school district: assessing educational needs, involving staff and community, and providing vehicles for change to take place. This framework is then used to describe programs implemented in Georgia's Clarke County School District. The district needs assessment is described as involving community residents, university and school district staff members, and the school board. The author lists a number of pitfalls to avoid in needs assessment, including committee leadership that is either too weak or too strong and people who have an ax to grind. In discussing the involvement of staff and community in effecting change, the author lists district programs including parents and community members--especially senior citizens. For example, volunteers are used to call parents of absentees and were used to set up a teen health curriculum. Community organizations also work with the school district in such areas as drug education and cultural affairs. Community members teach "minilessons" on many topics. In the concluding section on vehicles for change, the author mentions three modes for effecting change in the district: the District Curriculum Council, the cooperative plan for staff development, and parent advisory and volunteer groups. (Author/JM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED191170

Strategies for Effective Instructional Planning and Change

AASA SUMMER CONFERENCE

CHICAGO

July 8, 1980

Presentation by

Dr. Rodney D. Spring

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R.D. Spring

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 012 915

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND CHANGE

A member of Xerox's corporate staff shared with me what he considered to be a major factor of his company's success--the ability to effect change. The change, most of the time, resulted in a more economical and efficient operation. He further stated that an organization needs to implement planned change at least every five years if it is to stay viable. This was some time ago, and now the number may be less. I also recall a fellow administrator stating that if educators had developed the Edsel automobile we would still be trying to sell it. Oddly enough, now it has become a classic, who can say whether this change was ever needed.

Change within an organization takes place whether planned or not. It is generally agreed upon that planned change is much more beneficial for providing direction rather than facing the unexpected.

A review of the literature will show there is ample research that views change within a theoretical framework with accompanying models. The approaches being offered today reflect a practioner's response to the every-present need for change.

Betram Gross in The Managing of Organizations wrote

> One activity blends into another. Every achievement creates certain difficulties. Every solution creates new problems. Neither people nor purposes ever remain immobile. Organizations are born and they die. Their members enter and leave. If the process of change is not evident from outside or is not formally legitimized, it takes place beneath the surface.

Three steps to effecting change within a school district are: (1) assessing educational needs; (2) involving staff and community; and (3) providing vehicles for change to take place.

Step 1: Assess Educational Needs

A needs assessment in some school districts can be, and sometimes is, something of a joke. Often times it is what you do when you don't know what else to do. It has been an elaborate and public form of busy work. Unfortunately, a needs assessment, like many well-intentioned curriculum projects, has ended in someone's office closet--unread, unacted upon, and destined to obscurity. However, a needs assessment that is well planned, or one that involves the broadest base of parent, student, community, teacher and administrator participation is the first step to effecting successful change.

T-1 A model recently implemented in the Clarke County School District involved the cooperative efforts of Clarke County community members, University of Georgia staff members, and the school district's staff members. Due to the purpose and direction of the study, the district staff had the greatest involvement in the area committees. All recommendations were forwarded to the Board of Education and any decision making was solely their responsibility.

The major responsibility of coordinating the efforts of the nine area committees was assigned to the steering committee. This committee, chaired by the superintendent of schools, was comprised of four representatives from the community, four from the university, and six from the staff. The selection of these representatives was the responsibility of the Board of Education, acting on the recommendation of the superintendent.

The area committees were also representative of the community, university, and the district staff. Recommended numbers for each committee were ten to fifteen members--also invited to serve by the Board of Education. The invitations did not exclude the participation of volunteers who expressed a desire and an interest to serve. District staff personnel were assigned as resource people to provide information and data about school programs. Community members, appointed by the Board of Education, served as committee chairpersons. This action provided credibility to the report that was presented.

The basic charge to all committees was to evaluate the present status of the Clarke County School District, and to make recommendations which would become the basis of future planning. Any further definition of purpose and responsibility for each committee was an option given to the membership, with assistance from the steering committee, if necessary.

The major emphasis of this needs assessment was oriented towards identifying the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the needs of the school district. At the same time, the area committees were requested to examine how the decision-making process functioned within their study areas. The time line for the assessment was as follows:

December 1978	Board of Education adoption
January 1979	Formulation of committees
February	Adoption and activation of committees
March/April	Functioning of committees
May	Progress reports
June	Report to the Board of Education

September	Reactivation of committees
October	Functioning of committees
November	Finalization of committee reports
December	Area reports to steering committee
January 1980	Report to Board of Education. Adoption of five-year plan.

Like "the best plans of mice and men" the study was slipped by two months, but the March date was an acceptable alternative. We did have flexibility built into the study, knowing the possibility could occur and did.

In doing our study, we ran into a few anticipated problems, e.g. our time schedule, but as Murphy's law relates--if anything can go wrong, it will--and at the worst time with the worst results.

Some pitfalls of which you should be aware:

a) Weak committee leadership.
   Inability to lead the committee towards its goal.

b) Strong committee leadership.
   I'll determine what we are to do, because I'm chairman!

c) No leadership.
   I'm just too busy to get this committee together, etc.

d) People who have "an ax to grind" against you, the Board of Education, the district, or education. Their criticism is anything but constructive.

e) Staff members.
   Invite staff members who will represent the district in its best light--intelligent, cooperative, objective, forthright.

f) Make sure the information you give to the committee is accurate, up to date, and addresses the topic under study.

g) Budget money to do the job properly--secretarial help, typing, supplies and materials.

h) Obtain a coordinator to handle the study who can relate well in all situations.

i) Keep your hand in the project, because people on committees are going to be asking you about the study. For example, over 200 community members participated and over 600 were surveyed. Over 4,000 man hours were spent in doing the study.

Step 2: Involve Staff and Community

Every school district has energetic, articulate people who have something to say and who will make the time to do something about their concerns. What that "something" is, depends on the school district. Shut them out and you may have disgruntled parents who become critics and adversaries, or disgruntled teachers who actively or inadvertently sabotage any efforts at curriculum change. Bring them into the decision-making and planning process and you have parents and teachers who become boosters of the program they feel is theirs.

Parents and community members in Clarke County are involved in the school program in various ways. They serve on advisory committees, handle clerical duties, and tutor on a one-to-one basis sharing their experiences and skills with many children through mini-classes. A successful innovation at one of our high schools this past year was a volunteer evening program to call the parents of absentees. A substantial reduction in the truancy rate resulted after a team of parents called the families of absentees between 5 and 8 p.m. to make sure they

knew that their children were absent from school that day. Parents were solicited through the school news in the paper and through personal contact. After the program began, other parents, who felt their children had benefited offered their services.

Parents and community members were also actively involved in Project Teen Concern, a health education program. These people joined a group comprised of personnel from various health agencies, as well as professors and graduate students in health education to help the school district develop a health curriculum, to set up in-service for teachers and to serve as consultants in reviewing materials. Project Teen Concern was exceptionally helpful in supporting publicly the need for a health curriculum. There is strength in using a community group when any controversial subject i.e., human sexuality has to be defended; the group here served as a strong base of support.

Senior citizens can play an important role in a school district. In Clarke County, an 84-year-old resident of a retirement apartment complex was instrumental in compiling a collection of childhood memories written by senior citizens at the center. The collection, called "Sketches of Life," was published by the district and is available in school libraries. Not only were senior citizens involved; students and teachers edited the stories and worked closely with the elderly authors. All participants felt they were leaving a legacy to the children of Clarke County. Remember, this group votes and because of fixed incomes cannot support spending more money.

Senior citizens also serve in several elementary schools. For example, three people faithfully make weekly visits to schools, listening to individual students read and reading to other groups. Another woman, through the Athens Council on

Aging, spent six weeks teaching middle school students the art of quilting and made sure each student took home a handmade pillow at the end of the project. We believe we must get these people into our schools. The average age of Americans goes higher with each passing year.

Several community organizations work closely with the school district. The mental Health Center has produced a film presentation on drug education, and the Alliance for Arts Education has distributed a community resource guide to all of the schools. A University of Georgia group, called the Docents, give tours of the museum throughout the year and take their "Suitcase Tours" to individual classrooms upon request. The Cultural Affairs Office offers activities for school children, furthermore, the staff provides transportation for special performances or workshops. The Clarke County TAG (Talented and Gifted) organization has teachers serving on various committees; the director of instruction is on the Advisory Council for the countywide group.

Individuals have often taken a special interest in the schools. A young attorney in town has organized a group who teaches a course on the law at one of our middle schools. This same young man also wrote a history of blacks in Athens, called A Story Untold. This book, published by the school district, is used in the eighth grade curriculum unit on Georgia history.

Another individual has devised a way to reward academic achievement by taking her "Brain Train" to the middle schools. This year, the "Brain Train" traveled to the middle school attended by the state spelling bee winner. Recognition and rewards were given to the student and her family at the honors assembly in an attempt to encourage others to excel so that the "Brain Train" will return again next year. The woman goes to local businesses soliciting prizes for those who have

achieved academically and strives to publicly recognize these students. She became interested in this endeavor because of her daughter-in-law, who is a middle school teacher. The teacher's enthusiasm and dedication "rubbed off" and brought about the creation of the "Brain Train."

The middle schools also have a program called "Spotlight" which brings together community members, students and teachers. An invitation is issued to a person to tell about his or her particular field and to encourage students to stay in school and to read. During the year, a man brought his 18-wheeler, a disc jokey shared the tricks of her trade, a hypnotist taught students to relax and a graduate student in music played the piano and sang.

Mini-lessons have been a popular project in our elementary and middle schools for several years. One principal describes a mini-lesson as "an hour's worth of enrichment, exposure to new ideas, and FUN!" These mini-courses are usually held every Friday from 1 to 2 p.m. with each student participating in five classes during the school year. Everyone--mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandparents, friends, university faculty and students, senior citizens--teaches mini-lessons which cover all areas--sports, sciences, arts, animals, crafts, careers, cooking, health, and sewing--to name only a few. Trips to various points of interest on the university campus and throughout the city are also a part of the program.

T-2,3 Aside from mini-lessons of Spotlight programs, volunteers assist in other ways. At many schools, teachers are asked to fill out a form listing what volunteer help is needed. A volunteer (or community) coordinator, in making assignments, matches up requests from teachers with information supplied by the volunteer. Volunteers' skills, experiences and willingness to work are utilized, while teachers have more time for students and teaching.

Parent participation is promoted at several schools through breakfasts for fathers. These breakfasts have been well received and well attended. The children look forward to having their fathers make a brief visit to their classrooms following the program which usually includes a speaker and performance by the school chorus or gymnastics team.

Parents are also encouraged to participate in neighborhood coffees. At least three of our elementary principals organize these get-togethers, held in homes, in order to answer questions and to become better acquainted with the people in their attendance zones. An informal, cozy atmosphere makes everyone more comfortable and more positive about the school situation.

It should be stressed that parents and community members are not running our schools. They are, instead, invaluable resources who are willing to help. By offering their assistance, these people are enriching their lives, as well as those of students and teachers.

This change is effected by the involvement of people. The education community is any area that sends you children. When you want to change the status quo, it is very important to have all these people on your side.

Step 3: Provide Vehicles for Change to Take Place

The demand for participation in school decision making is not new. Some school districts satisfy this need by holding occasional public hearings, at budget time or when a bond issue is contemplated. Other school districts distribute attitude surveys, school climate questionnaires and depend on curriculum projects initiated, pursued and completed by small cadres of hand-picked teachers and administrators. At best, the response to the cry for more teacher and parent participation is erratic; at worst, it is defensive and insular.

Three vehicles/modes which have worked successfully to effect change within our school district are: (1) the District Curriculum Council; (2) a systematic and cooperative plan for staff development; and (3) numerous parent-advisory and volunteer groups.

(1) The District Curriculum Council serves as the school district's primary review and advisory committee in the process of total curriculum development and implementation. Members of the council are teachers and principals elected by their peer groups. This includes one teacher from each of the 16 schools, one principal from each level, and four members from the central office staff. In addition, each school and principal's group also elects an alternate who serves when a committee member is absent. The Director of Instruction presides at each meeting as a non-voting member. Terms of office vary from one to three years on a rotating basis.

The major functions of the District Curriculum Council are:

a) To evaluate and review proposals and recommendations that are referred by the K-12 curriculum committees and to recommend those that ensure continuity of instruction and realistic implementation of the curriculum.

b) To make curricular decisions that are consistent with the stated philosophy of the school district, keeping in focus budget, staff, time, and facilities that are available.

c) To initiate curriculum changes by delegating responsibilities to the appropriate sub-committee for curriculum study and evaluation, or in the absence of such a committee, appoint committees to research proposed changes and submit recommendations.

d) To recommend to the Systemwide Staff Development Committee in-service programs desirable for implementing the established curriculum or approved curricular changes.

e) To screen and review the purchase of appropriate instructional materials as requested by the K-12 committees and make recommendations. A systematic rotation plan will be employed to determine budgetary priorities for implementation of new programs.

f) To review grant applications and their appropriateness to to the district's educational policies and submit for funding consideration those that meet the criteria.

g) To initiate and review a needs assessment in any areas of the curriculum as indicated by concerns expressed by the superintendent, the curriculum committees, or other interested individuals.

One of my purposes in originating the District Curriculum Council was to implement instructional changes by making an organizational change. My problem was working with a staff member who didn't want to change.

(2) The second vehicle which has worked well to bring about change in the Clarke County School District is staff development. The district has operated an approved staff development program since 1974. By providing this program, the district is meeting four objectives prescribed by the State Department of Education:

a) To develop a positive attitude toward continuous self-improvement on the part of all educators.

b) To provide for continuous improvement in the basic skills and knowledge of practicing educators.

c) To make continuous staff improvement the basis for recertification of educational personnel.

d) To allow local school districts to determine student needs, identify needed staff competencies, and plan training activities for professional staff members to meet those student needs.

In short, Georgia's plan for staff development is based on the assumption that one way to improve education, or to effect change, is to update and upgrade the knowledge and skills of educational personnel. The major emphasis of our staff development program in Clarke County is on incorporating applicable knowledge, skills and attitudes into the control and organization of the curricula, the methods and materials of instruction and the procedures by which education achieves desired student results.

T - 4 The two staff development coordinators head a districtwide Committee for Certification Renewal and Staff Development. This committee establishes procedure and policy and approves all individual, group or school plans. Composed of representatives from each of our schools, including Athens Vocational-Technical School, the committee meets monthly during the school year.

By the time the committee has approved a plan, student goals and teacher/administrative competencies, improvement practices to be implemented and preparation plans are all established for each course. Following a workshop, which may take one day, or a course, which may meet weekly for several months, the teacher is involved in an on-the-job assessment.

According to the coordinators, this on-the-job evaluation is the most important aspect of a staff development course since the educator is putting what was learned into practice in the actual classroom situation. Each participant must be assessed by

at least two evaluators, one of whom must be the immediate supervisor. The other evaluators, all of whom are approved in advance, may include a department head, an experienced teacher, experts in a given field, or university personnel.

Interest and participation have increased steadily since the program began six years ago. During this past school year, over 350 teachers and administrators took advantage of the many course offerings. The 1978-79 school year records show 251 participants, up from 210 the year before.

T - 5 Staff development activities during the 1979-80 school year varied from reading in Title I resource rooms, to early childhood development instruction, to people skills in the classroom. Two of the most popular courses were manual communication and organizing for classroom management. A timely and well-attended class was first aid with heartsaver CPR. Other activities have included creative problem solving, child growth and development, and nature and curriculum needs of the middle school learner. Our artist-in-residence, with us through the Georgia Council on the Arts and Humanities, provided a workshop on stress reduction through movement.

In addition to fulfilling recertification needs, staff development has a side-effect of creating active in-service in the schools. At one elementary school, the entire faculty decided to look at test scores in order to see if needs were being met and if curriculum changes should occur. Supervisors and consultants were brought in to teach teachers to analyze the test scores and to make needed changes.

In another instance, the kindergarten teachers saw a need for improving their reading management system when more and more students were obviously ready for reading. After months of work in which a language experience approach was correlated with objectives and techniques in the first grade, these teachers produced a guide for reading and writing in the early years. The kindergarten teachers have

now begun working on a mathematics guide.

Although not formally a part of staff development, such activities as these were certainly stimulated by staff development. And important changes were effected when teachers and administrators recognized areas needing improvement.

Change can take place by the natural course of events; it can be instituted by authority or it can occur by use of the political process. This last procedure is one of using the sytem along with a knowledge of people to accomplish your goal. It is always important to know what to anticipate and the environment in which you are operating. Change may not always be for the best, but whatever your goal for change, plan for it.